Section 5

# Judaism

## Prepare to Read

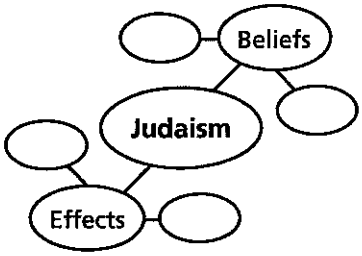
### Objectives

In this section you will

1. Learn about the basic beliefs of Judaism.
2. Find out about the effect that Judaism has had on other religions.

### Taking Notes

As you read, list details that characterize Judaism. Copy the concept web below, and use it to help you summarize this section.




### Target Reading Skill

**Summarize** When you summarize, you review and state, in the correct order, the main points you have read. Summarizing what you read is a good technique to help you comprehend and study. As you read, pause to summarize the main ideas about Judaism. The diagram you are using to take notes may help you to summarize.

### Key Terms

- **covenant** (KUV uh nunt) *n.* a promise made by God
- **Moses** (MOH zuz) *n.* an Israelite leader whom the Torah credits with leading the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan
- **prophet** (PRAHF it) *n.* a religious teacher who is regarded as someone who speaks for God or for a god
- **diaspora** (dy AS pur uh) *n.* the scattering of people who have a common background or beliefs

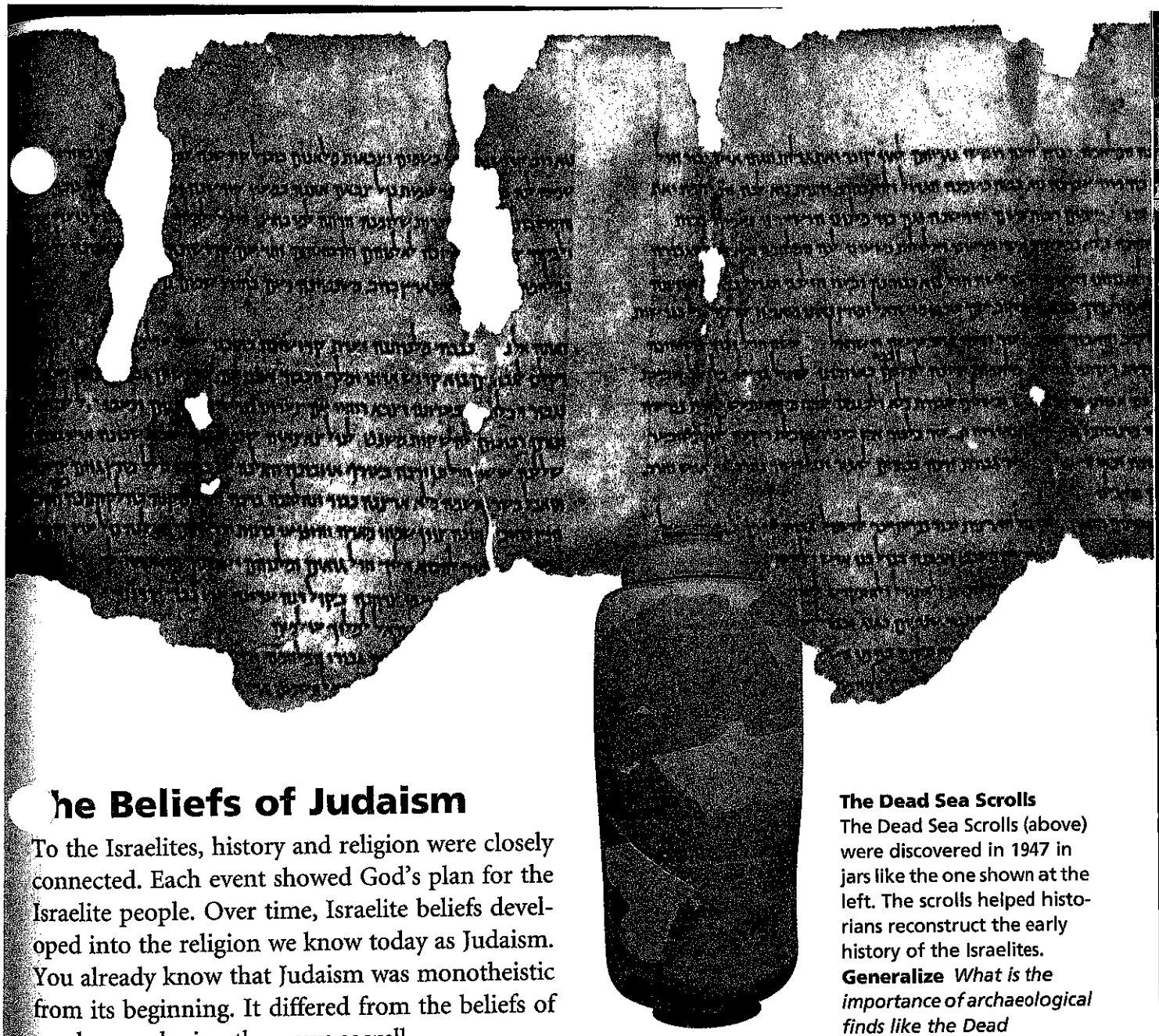
**Reading from the Torah**

The Torah, the most sacred text of Judaism, says God made a promise to the Israelite leader Abraham:

> **"I will increase your numbers very, very much, and I will make you into nations—kings will be your descendants. . . . I will be a God to you and to your [descendants]."**
>
> *—the Torah*

This promise has helped shape the history of the people of Israel from ancient times to the present.

The early Israelites came to believe that God was taking part in their history. The Torah records events and laws important to the Israelites. It is made up of five books. They are called Genesis (JEN uh sis), Exodus, Leviticus (luh VIT ih kus), Numbers, and Deuteronomy (doo tur AHN uh mee). Later, Christians adopted these books as the first five books of the Old Testament. The promise that you just read is from the Book of Genesis. In Genesis, we learn of the very beginnings of Judaism.



## The Beliefs of Judaism

To the Israelites, history and religion were closely connected. Each event showed God's plan for the Israelite people. Over time, Israelite beliefs developed into the religion we know today as Judaism. You already know that Judaism was monotheistic from its beginning. It differed from the beliefs of nearby peoples in other ways as well.

**The Dead Sea Scrolls**
The Dead Sea Scrolls (above) were discovered in 1947 in jars like the one shown at the left. The scrolls helped historians reconstruct the early history of the Israelites.
**Generalize** *What is the importance of archaeological finds like the Dead Sea Scrolls?*

**A Promise to the Israelites** Most ancient people thought of their gods as being connected to certain places or people. The Israelites, however, believed that God is present everywhere. They believed that God knows everything and has complete power.

According to the Torah, God promised Abraham that his people would become kings and build nations. God said to Abraham, "I will keep my promise to you and your descendants in future generations as an everlasting covenant." Because of this **covenant**, or promise made by God, the Israelites considered themselves to be God's "chosen people." This covenant was later renewed by **Moses**, an Israelite leader who lived sometime around 1200 B.C. He told the Israelites that God would lead them to Canaan, "the promised land." In return, the Israelites had to obey God faithfully.

Target Skill

**Summarize**
Summarize the paragraph at the left. Be sure to include the key points and important details about God's promise to the Israelites.

**Links Across Time**

**Kosher** In Judaism, laws require that certain foods be kosher (KOH shur), meaning "fit for use." These laws are based on passages from the Hebrew Bible. For seafood to be kosher, for example, it must have scales and fins. So, codfish is kosher, but clams are not. Other laws tell how animals meant for consumption should be slaughtered and how food must be prepared and eaten. Not all Jews follow these strict dietary laws today.

**The Ten Commandments** At the heart of Judaism are the Ten Commandments. The Israelites believed that God delivered the Commandments to them through Moses. Some Commandments set out religious duties toward God. Others are rules for correct behavior. Here are some of the Commandments.

> **"I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. . . . You shall have no other gods beside Me. . . . Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded. . . . You shall not murder. You shall not steal."**
>
> *—the Ten Commandments*

In addition to the Ten Commandments, the Torah set out many other laws. Some had to do with everyday matters, such as how food should be prepared. Others had to do with crimes. Like Hammurabi's Code, many of the Israelites' laws tried to match punishments to crimes. At the same time, religious teachers called on leaders to carry out the laws with justice and mercy.

**Judaism and Women** Some laws protected women. One of the Commandments, for example, requires that mothers be treated with respect. But, as in many other religions, women were considered to be of lower social status than men. A man who was head of a family owned his wife and children. A father could sell his daughters into marriage. Only a husband could seek a divorce.

Early in Israelite history a few women, such as the judge Deborah, won honor and respect as religious leaders. Later on, however, women were not allowed to take part in many religious leadership roles.

**Before sunset on Friday evenings, Jewish women light white Shabbat candles and say a blessing.**

MAP MASTER™ Skills Activity

## Jewish Settlements, A.D. 100–300

**Movement** By A.D. 300, Jews—followers of Judaism—had settled in many areas far from Jerusalem. **Identify** What cities near the Mediterranean did Jews settle in? **Infer** What role do you think the Mediterranean Sea played in the movement of Jews at this time?

**Go Online** PHSchool.com Use Web Code lbp-2265 for step-by-step map skills practice.

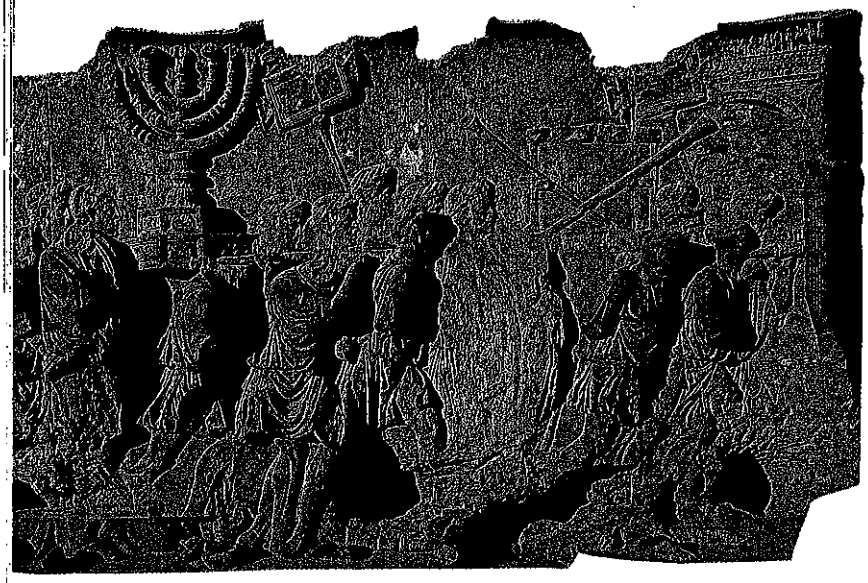
**Justice and Morality** The history of the Israelites tells of **prophets**, or religious teachers who are regarded as speaking for God. The prophets told the Israelites how God wanted them to live. They warned the people not to disobey God's law. Disobedience could bring disaster.

Prophets preached a code of ethics, or moral behavior. They urged the Israelites to live good and decent lives. They also called on the rich and powerful to protect the poor and weak. All people, the prophets said, were equal before God. In many ancient societies, a ruler was seen as a god. To the Israelites, however, their leaders were human. Kings had to obey God's law just as shepherds and merchants did.

**✓ Reading Check** **What did the prophets tell the Israelites?**

## The Effects of Judaism

After their exile from Judah in 587 B.C., the Jews, or people who follow Judaism, saw their homeland controlled by various foreign powers, including the Romans. The Romans drove the Jews out of their homeland in A.D. 135. As a result, the Jewish people scattered to different parts of the world.



After defeating the Jews in battle in A.D. 70, Roman soldiers carried off precious objects from the temple in Jerusalem.

**New Settlements** The Romans carried on the Jewish **diaspora** (dy AS pur uh), the scattering of a group of people, begun by the Assyrians and Chaldeans. See the map titled Jewish Settlements, A.D. 100–300, on page 59.

Wherever they settled, the Jews preserved their heritage. They did so by living together in close communities. They took care to obey their religious laws, worship at their temples, and follow their traditions. The celebration of Passover is one such tradition. It marks a time when Israelites believed their children were spared from destruction. Death "passed over" them, and they were led out of Egypt by Moses. Over time, such long-held traditions helped to unite Jews.

**Effects on Later Religions** Judaism had an important influence on two later religions, Christianity and Islam. Both religions have their beginnings in Judaism. Both faiths originated from the same geographical area. Both were monotheistic. Jews, Christians, and followers of Islam all honor Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. They also share the same moral point of view that the Israelites first developed.

✓ **Reading Check** **How did the Jews preserve their heritage?**

## Section 5 Assessment

### Key Terms

Review the key terms at the beginning of this section. Use each term in a sentence that explains its meaning.

### Target Reading Skill

Write a summary of the last paragraph in this section.

### Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. **(a) Identify** What promise did the Israelites believe God made to Abraham?
**(b) Explain** What did God's covenant with Abraham require of the Israelites?
**(c) Analyze Information** Why did the Israelites believe that they were God's chosen people?
2. **(a) Recall** What religious laws did the Israelites follow?
**(b) Compare and Contrast** How does Judaism compare and contrast with the beliefs of other peoples in the ancient world?
**(c) Draw Inferences** What do the laws of Judaism say about the moral values of the Israelites?

### Writing Activity

Suppose you have a friend who wants to learn more about Judaism. Write him or her a letter explaining the basic beliefs and history of Judaism.

**Writing Tip** When writing a letter, remember to include the date, a salutation, or greeting, and a closing. It might help to have a specific friend in mind when you write your letter.